

THE A B C  
OF  
AUCTION BRIDGE  
AND  
OTHER BRIDGE VARIATIONS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE popularity of Auction Bridge promises to be as rapid and as complete as was that of the parent game—Bridge proper. Just as the superior attractions of the latter over the sober interests of Whist were at once recognised, so are the greater possibilities of the new variant claiming adherents among those who prefer excitement to science in their recreations. And it must be admitted, although as a confirmed Bridge enthusiast I grieve to have to concede

the point, Auction offers far greater scope for individual enterprise than its older rival, and for a time at least its fascination promises to be irresistible.

For one thing, it appeals to the gambling instinct. It is a clever combination of Bridge, Solo Whist, and Poker, and calls for the qualities which make for success in all three games. The stereotyped Bridge-player would be at as great a disadvantage without a thorough knowledge of the intricacies of Auction as would a Poker player who did not know Bridge. Given each an equal proficiency, and the player with the

Poker temperament will have the upper hand.

I shall, however, for the sake of brevity, take it for granted that readers of this little volume are acquainted with the laws and play of ordinary Bridge. Those who are not can gain the requisite information from any of the hundred and one excellent Bridge manuals. But does there exist a card-player in this year of grace who does not understand Bridge? If so, he must be in too small a minority to deserve special consideration. We will therefore start with the assumption that we are all sufficiently students of Bridge to be able to appreciate

the distinctions between the two games.

And here let it be said that the confirmed Bridge-player will have as much to unlearn as to learn in acquiring the principles of Auction Bridge. For instance, what can be more difficult to grasp than the fact that there is no advantage in having the deal—indeed, rather the reverse? Or that the calling of “No Trumps” entails no greater risk than a spade declaration? Again, that calling to the score loses its significance, as the opposition cannot win the game on a defeated call, or that as a rule it is more profitable to defeat an

opponent's call than to win the game? The whole point of view is changed, and the more ingrained are the fundamental principles of ordinary Bridge the greater will be the confusion of the player until he shall become imbued with the reckless optimism essential to Auction Bridge, but fatal to its predecessor.

### *THE LAWS.*

I shall first set forward, as briefly as possible, the laws of the game, always, of course, taking for granted that my readers are Bridge-players. The game and the rubber are the same in both cases—thirty points

scored below the line, and the best of three games. Honours, chicane, and grand and little slam are scored above the line and are counted just as in ordinary Bridge. The difference lies in the scoring of tricks made against the declarer. These are invariably scored *above* the line and are counted with the honours at the end of the rubber. They have no bearing upon the game. Only the tricks won by the *declarer* are scored below the line. Every trick below the number the declarer has contracted to make counts 50 points to the opposition, no matter in what suit or call it may be. Thus the failure to make one trick in

spades is as expensive as in clubs, diamonds, hearts, or No Trumps. The penalty is uniform.

There is still some diversity of opinion as to the number of points to be scored for the rubber. The more established rule is to award 250 points, but many players still prefer to score 50 points for each game won and an additional 200 points for the rubber. Personally I prefer the former method. The laws as to shuffling, cutting and dealing are the same ; also those applying to exposed cards and cards liable to be called as played in error.

*THE REVOKE.*

There are differences, however, in the penalty for a revoke. When a revoke against the declarer is claimed, his adversaries score 150 points above the line in addition to the amount of the undertricks by which the declarer has failed to carry out his contract. In the case of the adversaries revoking, the declarer may add 150 points above the line or he may add three tricks to those he has taken, if, for instance, he should need them to complete his contract. In neither case is the penalty increased by a double or redouble, nor is the bonus for a double or redouble (see later) to be taken.

### *THE DECLARATIONS.*

Before coming to the all-important question of the declaration, wherein lies the whole art of Auction as distinguished from ordinary Bridge, it may be as well to set forth the progressive calls as they take precedence of each other. When two contracts are of equal point value, the undertaking to make the greater number of tricks ranks the higher. Thus a declaration of two tricks in spades overcalls one trick in clubs; two tricks in clubs or diamonds is an advance on one in hearts or No Trumps respectively. To avoid any confusion, it may be mentioned here that the con-

tract to make one trick in any suit means the odd trick ; two tricks in a suit, eight tricks, and so on.

The following list of progressive calls may be found useful : —

2	spades	beat	1	club.
3	"	"	1	diamond.
4	"	"	1	heart.
6	"	"	1	No Trumps or 2 diamonds.
2	clubs	"	1	heart.
3	"	"	1	No Trumps or 2 diamonds.
4	"	"	2	hearts.
6	"	"	2	No Trumps.
2	diamonds	"	1	"
4	"	"	2	"
3	hearts	"	2	"
6	"	"	4	"

The dealer in Auction Bridge does not start with any advantage ; rather is he at a disadvantage by reason of having to make a compulsory call. He cannot leave the obligation to his partner. Neither is the play of the two hands assured to him as in ordinary Bridge. Either of his adversaries or his partner may become the declarer by calling above him. It is true that he has the right of the final call after everyone else has been satisfied, but, as we shall see, the odds against his being able to avail himself of this privilege are such as to render it only an occasional benefit.

Having to start the running, his

policy is to give away as little information as he can about his hand. Hence the first call is usually "One Spade," *i.e.*, he undertakes to make the odd trick in spades. This is a mere formality and conveys no information either as to strength or weakness, and it is understood that if second player passes, his partner, third player, shall help him out of the call by a higher declaration, "Two Spades," if he cannot do better. The reason for this will be explained later. So, with "One Spade" from dealer, second player can overcall or pass. If third player calls "Two Spades," "One Diamond" is the lowest con-

tract that takes precedence of it. A double reopens the bidding (see later). For instance, if, say, a call of "Two Hearts" has been doubled, the declarer of that contract can amend it to "Two No Trumps," and so on. And this he can do, if expedient, without any fear of increasing the penalty for failure, for the loss is the same in both instances—50 points for every trick under the contract and *scored above the line*. Failure does not affect the game, and therefore he may take wider liberties in this direction than at ordinary Bridge. We will give an illustration.

Let us suppose that one of the

players has been forced to call "Two Hearts" on doubtful strength. The declaration is doubled and he stands to lose 100 points for every trick below the number he has undertaken to make. Whereas if he raises his call to "Two No Trumps," and it is not doubled, he at least halves his loss per trick, and his opponents may be driven to calling "Three Hearts," a formidable task with a call in that suit coming from the other side.

"One Spade" is a useful call when dealer has a certain No Trump hand, with strength in all four suits. If "One No Trump" or "Two Hearts" has been called over him, he is in a

safe position to call "Two No Trumps," and in the very improbable case of being doubled, can then redouble, by this means perhaps forcing the opposition to call beyond their strength, as explained above, when the dealer in turn can double with every chance of defeating the declaration. For it must be understood that the winning of the game is not the supreme object of Auction Bridge. The heavy scoring is done above the line by defeating one's adversaries.

With moderate strength in three or more suits, however, an initial call of "One No Trump" can be recommended. The dealer is not likely to be

left to make it or to be doubled, and so he at once forces up the bidding to "Two Diamonds" at least and gives his partner some idea of the kind of hand he holds. Thus if the latter has strength in one of the red suits, he can contract to make two in it, so going a step higher.

The dealer should never make an initial red-suit declaration without pronounced strength in it and the possession of the head cards. The last consideration must be observed in making such a call at any time. Aces and Kings are of far greater importance than in ordinary Bridge. At all times the dealer should be careful not to de-

ceive his partner. If he possesses, however, overwhelming strength in one of the red suits and nothing else, it will be better for him to commence with a call of one trick in it. It can do no harm and will be at least a guide to third player.

From these remarks it will be seen that far more strategy goes to the making of an original declaration in Auction than in ordinary Bridge. The dealer does not necessarily set out to secure the play of the two hands or to win the game. Failure may be so much more expensive than the advantage of fulfilling a contract, that his policy is rather to foster the sporting instincts

of his adversaries than to take risks himself. "Bluff" enters considerably into the essence of the game, but it may prove expensive when carried too far with players who can draw sound deductions. On the other hand, it is often advisable to incur certain loss above the line, in order to keep the game open, with the hope of retrieving it in subsequent deals. The loss of the dealer's advantage makes this possible at any time.

Let us now proceed from the original call of "One Spade." In the majority of cases, second player should pass this, for the reason that if third player does not increase it, he makes a con-

fession of weakness, and, fourth player also passing, the dealer is left to get the odd trick in spades with no chance of materially augmenting his score and with a corresponding chance of losing 50 points for every trick by which he fails in his contract. Thus, third player is understood to be under an obligation to call "Two Spades" so as to give the dealer an opportunity of amending his call. This the latter should do at any cost, calling "One No Trump" on the slenderest justification. As I have pointed out above, the contract does not entail a heavier loss. He has not, moreover, given any information away regarding his own

hand, and may indeed be supposed to be laying a trap for his opponents. It is improbable that the opposition will leave him with a "One No Trump" call. Hence he has forced the bidding up to "Two Diamonds" as the lowest increase.

Now second hand is in some difficulty. He has gained no certain knowledge regarding the nature of dealer's cards and none whatever about his partner's. If he makes a rash call, he may be promptly doubled, and then he or his partner may be constrained to declare higher in order to get out of a dangerous situation. If, however, he possesses good strength in one of the

red suits and high cards in the other suits, what, in fact, would be otherwise a moderate No Trumper, then a two-card call in it is advisable. The bidding will have reached an interesting stage.

Failing such strength, second hand should leave things to his partner, who, possessing unusual strength, may prefer to leave the dealer in with a "One No Trump" call, on the tolerable certainty of being able to beat it. To double this call would be a tactical error, as one of the other side would probably take refuge in "Two Diamonds" or "Two Hearts." If this is the object of the opposition, then the

first double would be justified. The whole strategy of the game is to entice the other side into a risky declaration and then *to defeat it*. The higher the stage reached, the greater becomes the value of top cards in any of the suits. Say, for instance, one of the players has been driven to "Three Hearts." He has undertaken to make nine tricks. The adversaries have only to secure five and the declaration fails.

In supporting a partner's call, it is essential to grasp his motive for making it. Is it a voluntary one from strength or a compulsory one to evade a tight corner? Let me give an illustration:

"One Spade" has come from dealer. Second hand declares "One Heart." His only reason for doing so can be genuine strength in hearts. Hence if third hand tops it with "One No Trump," fourth hand, holding, say, one trick in hearts and two other tricks, or good general strength, may with safety say "Two Hearts."

On the other hand, an illustration of a forced call would be as follows: Third hand has raised dealer's original call of "One Spade" to "Two Spades." Fourth hand is unwise enough to double it. Dealer must get out of the declaration somehow. He contracts to make one trick in a more expensive

suit. His partner must not take this to mean that he has made a sound call. The dealer may be only seeking a way of escape. Deductions of this kind have a most important bearing upon the game. The adversaries too should draw the same distinctions. For example, dealer has been driven to call "One Heart." Second hand, having strong cards, with good trumps, may venture on "Two Hearts." If he has made a mistake and it is doubled, he can take refuge in "Two No Trumps." Or if confident of his own ability to fulfil his undertaking, he can redouble. Should, however, the dealer's call have been a weak one, the latter's only

refuge is "Two No Trumps," with the risk of being doubled.

Information afforded by the different declarations is most valuable and should be treasured up. It is as essential to note what has not been called as what has been called. And it is in this connection that the importance of following the score comes in. For instance, if your opponents, with their score at 16 or 18 in the rubber game, passed your partner's "One No Trump" declaration, the inference would be that they were weak in either of the red suits that would take them out with a two-trick call. One of them would certainly have overcalled if he saw any

chance of victory. Again, suppose that the bidding had been raised to "Three Diamonds" by one of the adversaries, and instead of doubling, your partner branches into "Two No Trumps," is it not safe to infer that diamonds is his weak spot? The instances may be multiplied and will suggest themselves to the intelligent player. More direct information can, of course, be drawn from what has been called. Say your partner has gone "Two Diamonds"; possessing nothing in that suit yourself, but strength in the other suits, you are at once encouraged to raise the declaration to "Two No Trumps." If such a call came from the other side, the in-

formation would in the same way suggest caution.

On the subject of raising your partner's call, there is one point to be noted. As far as the laws have been definitely framed, it is the original caller of a suit that plays the hand. Thus if your partner should say "One Heart," and is overcalled by "One No Trump," if you are able to support him by "Two Hearts," which is passed, you become dummy although your declaration is higher. There are still many expert players, however, who prefer to give the play of the hands to the final call, and I am inclined to agree with them. But it must be

understood that the first method is the more official.

### *DOUBLING.*

Doubling in Auction differs in several respects from ordinary Bridge. In both cases only the score is affected. But in Auction the bidding is reopened by a double or redouble, and a doubled "Two Diamonds" would give place to the higher call of "Two Hearts." A call can only be doubled or redoubled once. A player may redouble a double of his partner's declaration, but he may not double it. If the final declarer's contract has been doubled, and he shall succeed in carry-

ing it out, he is entitled to add a bonus of 50 points to his score *above the line*, and a further 50 points for every trick he shall make above the stipulated number. The amount is doubled in the event of his having redoubled.

When the opposing side have doubled and defeated a call they score 100 points above the line for every trick under the number which the declarer has undertaken to make, *i.e.*, suppose the call has been "Two No Trumps" and the player only makes five tricks, his adversaries score 300 points. In the case of a redouble they receive 200 points for every under-trick.

*Curry*

There is one important exception, however, which tends to minimise the possible hardship of the dealer having to make a compulsory original call on a very poor hand. The maximum amount his adversaries are entitled to score above the line for defeating a doubled one-spade call is 100 points. If his partner raises the call to "Two Spades" the rule does not apply, but, holding no strength himself, third player has thus the option of leaving the dealer with the initial declaration. In spite of what we have said regarding the obligation of third hand to help his partner out of this more or less formal opening, it may sometimes

be expedient to take advantage of this refuge for extreme weakness. A player must use his own judgment when the occasion for exercising caution presents itself. Personally, however, I never think this defensive measure justified.

Doubling plays such an essential part in Auction Bridge that I will add a few general remarks under this heading before passing to the general play of the game. For one thing, it is the most potent factor in forcing the opposing hands to call above their capacity. The loss above the line on a doubled contract when defeated is so heavy that most players will be tempted to bluff, in order to avoid it.

As the liability is not increased by losing in a higher declaration this policy is more often than not justifiable. Thus a player, having called "Two Hearts" and being doubled, may find it expedient to rise to "Two No Trumps," especially if he knows his partner has strength in one of the other suits. Should he, in turn, be overtopped by "Three Hearts" he is himself in a nice position to double. If, on the other hand, he is once more doubled, he is in no worse position as regards his losses.

The loophole afforded by the right to call again makes it advisable not to double too soon. "One Card" calls

are made so much more lightly at Auction Bridge that to double such a one is often to frighten the opposition into another declaration. The proper course, as I have said before, is to try and force the declaration higher by calling something else, for to double on trumps alone, without general strength, is an error in the majority of cases.

The more favourable position for doubling is when you are on the right of the declarer, as, sitting over his partner, you deprive the latter of the chance of changing the suit. Of course, if you wish the suit changed, the reverse policy holds good. The

state of the game must always be a consideration in doubling. In addition to piling up your score *above* the line, your object is to keep the game open, and so to double "Two Hearts" or "Two No Trumps" at love all in the rubber game is not so justifiable as when the adversaries' score is well advanced. If they just fulfil their contract they go out on the doubled call, whereas, if left alone, they would fall short of the game. If, however, the winning of the contract will take them out in any case there is only an insignificant loss entailed in doubling them and the very solid advantage of frightening them into a more specula-

tive undertaking. The higher the call the better the chance of defeating it.

Finally, it cannot be impressed too clearly upon the beginner that a confident and premature double mostly defeats its object. The opponents take fright and turn to something else. With the certainty of defeating a declaration it is better to simply pass it and be satisfied with the 50 points per undertrick. To double a weak call holding invincible strength in it is a blunder. Only when the strength of a hand would justify a double of a higher call in another suit, or in a "No Trumper," should it be attempted.

I shall now take each of the four

hands separately, and, for the sake of emphasis, elaborate the advice already given.

### *THE DEALER.*

As we have seen, the dealer has to start the ball rolling ; he is obliged to declare something. Set against this disadvantage is his privilege of a final call after everybody else is satisfied. He is not therefore compelled to disclose the nature of his hand on the first round, and the better his cards the less reason has he to do so. He is bound to come in again, and meanwhile he may be able to glean information about his opponents' hands. His

usual first call, therefore, is "One Spade," on the understanding that his partner will not leave him with it. Second player will more often than not pass the call, and then third hand, if he does not wish to declare anything else, will rise to "Two Spades," while fourth hand, especially if he has a good spoiling hand, will pass in turn. The fulfilling of the contract only means 4 points below the line ; its defeat a substantial addition to the other side above the line. It is at this stage that the serious business of the dealer begins. There is still no obligation to call up to the full strength of his cards. He has gleaned

practically no information about the other hands. What shall his next move be?

As we have seen, a No Trump declaration can be made on a more slender foundation than in ordinary Bridge, so that if he holds moderate cards in three suits "One No Trump" offers little risk. It is no more expensive if defeated than "Two Spades," and is not likely to be doubled. It forces the opposition, moreover, up to a minimum of "Two Diamonds"; and if third hand possesses strength in only one suit he may then support the dealer with "Two No Trumps." But as he may reasonably suppose that the

dealer's second call was a forced one he may elect to leave the situation to the latter.

The "Two Diamond" contract comes round in turn to the dealer; the inference now is that his partner has no pronounced strength of any kind. Let us consider the kind of hand he himself is holding: Diamonds, three small ones; hearts, Ace, King and two others; clubs, Queen, ten and another; spades, King and two others. Hands of this kind can be multiplied according to the ingenuity of the reader, but it may be taken as typical of a weak No Trumper. To undertake to make two tricks in

hearts or No Trumps on it is no light matter. The dealer should therefore be guided by the score. If it is "Love all" he should be advised to pass, but if the adversaries are in a position to win the game, and maybe the rubber by fulfilling their contract, then a little bluff is permissible. "Two No Trumps" should be his next call. It will impress the opposition and will make them cautious about doubling. The probability is that the dealer will be left with the call, and may find little or no support from Dummy, but he will at least have kept the game open. The player who does not trust his luck should not play Auction Bridge.

But, holding such a hand as the above, a first call of "One No Trump" has much to recommend it, as at once forcing the adversaries' declaration up to a high point before either of them has been able to make any disclosures to the other. The more so is this the case when your own weak spot is a black suit. To overcall "One No Trump" on clubs, for instance, is a formidable task. The worst of this policy, however, is that it tells too much to your opponents if they know the game. They would infer from it that you had only a moderate hand, as you would not begin with such a declaration holding pronounced strength,

whereas "One Spade" conveys no information one way or the other.

Having a cast-iron No Trumper you should "lie low" and use it for forcing the other side into a rash undertaking which can be doubled. Having strong trumps in one of the red suits some sound players advocate beginning at once with it, on the ground that it is a guide to third player. Personally, I think it is forfeiting the chance of learning something which a "One Spade" call gives on the first round. If this suit comes back to you, you are in just as good a position to utilise the hearts or diamonds. When your strength in both these suits is equal—

say you have five of each and nothing else—it is better to call the lower of the two, *i.e.*, diamonds in preference to hearts. If you are doubled in diamonds you have a way of escape through the hearts.

The one exception to the stereotyped "One Spade" beginning, which is supposed to convey nothing, is when, as dealer, you hold great strength in one of the black suits and nothing else. If you conceal the fact, the advantage may be lost. You may be left to make your usual "Two Spades" and may succeed, but your score below the line is of little use except you want a few points to go out. On the other hand,

the information that you have the command of that suit may be of real value to your partner. It may give the support he needs in forming a sound No Trumper. Therefore an original call of "Two Spades" or "Two Clubs," as the case may be, should indicate to him the state of your hand. The information you afford, in this instance, is likely to be of more value to him than to the opposition.

Do not let the fascination of piling up your score above the line make you altogether blind to the advantage of the rubber. It is true that there is more to be made by defeating your opponents than by fulfilling your

own contract. I have made 1,200 points by defeating a rashly redoubled No Trumper, whereas winning the rubber game with a Grand Slam in No Trumps, and with four aces in your hand, amounts to less than 400 points. Still there are many occasions when it is more profitable to make the rubber than to put your adversaries in on the problematical chance of their having to present you with fifty or a hundred points above. Hence if you are in an easy position to win the rubber, I say go for a moral certainty. It is true that you may have an equal chance in the next deal, but then it is just as likely not to present itself and you may

have sacrificed a substantial score below the line in order to secure a third of the amount above. On the same principle, it is sometimes cheaper to let the opposition make the rubber on a safe declaration than to hazard a hopeless overcall which is likely to be doubled. There are players who insist that the game should be kept open at any cost, but the theory, correct enough up to a certain point, can be carried too far.

To summarise the foregoing remarks, an initial call of "One Spade" is advisable in nine cases out of ten, and the stronger the hand the more strictly should it be adhered to. The dealer

should have an understanding with his partner that he is not to be left with this original call, and he on his part should always overcall "Two Spades" when it comes round to him. A first call of "One No Trump" is sometimes expedient with moderate strength, but more as a guide to third hand and to force up adversaries' declaration than with any expectation of being left to make it. For the same reason, he may begin with "Two Spades" or "Two Clubs" if his sole strength lies in either of these suits. Dealer should not leave the opposition with a call which will give them game or rubber if he can possibly avoid it, but he

must not be too foolhardy in this direction.

We will now consider the policy of dealer's partner.

### *THIRD HAND.*

We have seen that third hand is under an obligation not to leave his partner with an original "One Spade," nor is he to draw any deduction from the call. It is entirely non-committal. When third hand has a Yarborough, it is a temptation to pass "One Spade" and so limit the possible loss to 100 points, but I do not myself think that this policy of caution is ever justified, and it tends to weaken the confidence

of the dealer. He may himself hold a perfect No Trumper : what then is his annoyance when he is left to make the odd trick in spades ! There is a diversity of opinion on this question, but mine is that such pusillanimous tactics are opposed to the spirit of the game. If he has nothing better to declare, therefore, third hand should say "Two Spades." But he should not hesitate to overcall his partner in another suit if he is in a position to do so. He has a twofold inducement—to raise the declaration and to give some indication of what cards he holds. The knowledge that he holds strength in any particular suit is of great assistance to

his partner. Hence it should be "One Club" rather than "Two Spades" if the call is justified. But it is not advisable to do so without holding the top cards of a suit. Small trumps, even if numerous, are of not so much account at Auction as at ordinary Bridge. Third hand, in calling another suit over "One Spade," is making a definite declaration, and dealer has every right to assume that it is made on genuine strength, whereas "Two Spades" means as little as its predecessor, *i.e.*, it does not necessarily mean strength in that suit, but rather no pronounced strength at all.

To overcall lightly on a red suit is still

more indefensible. For instance, third hand, having five small diamonds to the knave and little else of value, calls one of that suit first round. Fourth player rises to "One Heart." Dealer, having no diamonds himself, but three probable tricks in other suits, risks "Two Diamonds." It is doubled and defeated. The dealer was not to blame. He rightly inferred that his partner had the command in the trump suit.

There is no such objection to an overcall of "One No Trump" on the part of third hand. Indeed it is to be recommended on very light strength. Nevertheless there should be the foundation of a No Trumper.

The advantage lies in its persuasive influence upon the opposition. Eight tricks in one of the red suits is the lowest undertaking that has precedence over it. Then, if not overcalled, it is no more expensive to lose than any other declaration, and, moreover, offers the best chance of success on moderate cards.

To the beginner I would say, never hesitate to overcall your partner's declaration. I have seen so many opportunities lost by this mistaken caution. Because the dealer has gone "One No Trump" that is no reason why you should not raise it to two in a red suit, if you see a probability of

making eight tricks. You have at once told him the character of your hand, and if he cannot see his way, with this assistance, to "Two No Trumps," then you have relieved him of a very doubtful contract. Again, one of the adversaries may be lured into a risky call which one of you may be able to double. This last consideration is the most important inducement of all. In the same way, with divided strength, third hand should call "One No Trump" over partner's "One Heart" or "One Diamond." Or, if hearts is his suit, he should call it over a diamond declaration; but if dealer proceeds with his diamond contract, third hand

should then take it as an indication of confidence, and should not bid over it again. An original call of two tricks in a black suit should mean an invitation to third hand to call "No Trumps," with the knowledge that one suit at least is thoroughly protected.

In bidding against the opposition, more care will have to be exercised. For instance, dealer has gone "One No Trump" either on first or second round. Second hand has responded with two tricks in one of the red suits, of which third hand holds little or nothing. Even with something in the other suits, he runs a risk in helping his partner with "Two No

Trumps." The lead will come from the previous declarer, if he is left with this contract, and it is certain to be in the red suit of which he is short. Dealer may also hold nothing in it, and the contract may be defeated before the lead is secured. If, on the other hand, third player holds good cards in the trump suit called, he has to decide whether it is better to double it or to support the dealer's call. The latter has shown that he possesses fair general strength. With third hand's trumps, there should be a reasonable prospect of the two hands being too much for the two-trick contract in diamonds or hearts.

We may now turn to the policy of those who, until the declarations are completed, may be termed the opposition.

### *SECOND HAND.*

We have seen that second hand should, in the majority of instances, pass the original call of "One Spade," because it is morally certain to be raised by third hand and the chance will come again of calling from his strength, if dealer does not wish to be left with the two-spade contract. His position has then been improved by the fact that the second declaration of dealer has conveyed some sort of information

as to the nature of the cards he holds. That the dealer will elect to get out of an unprofitable spade call at any risk is only too probable, and second hand must therefore use his judgment in distinguishing between a forced call and a genuine undertaking. For example, "One No Trump" comes from dealer second round; has this been made from strength or as a tentative means of escape? Or again, is it a trap set for the unwary? Dealer may be lying low with fine attacking cards, and when second hand blithely calls two tricks in a red suit with fair strength in it and little else, may promptly double. Second hand has

thus undertaken to make eight tricks with perhaps only five trumps as his hope of succeeding.

Second hand should therefore be guided by the general strength of his own cards in raising a "One No Trump" contract or in leaving it alone. If he himself has good general cards and a strong red suit, it is better for him to declare two tricks in the latter. What he should not do is to double the preceding contract. To do so may be to frighten his opponents into the other red suit in which he may not be able to render any help in defeating. And then in calling to his hand he has told his partner wherein lies his strength.

But if second hand is in doubt he should leave matters to his partner. The state of the score must, of course, be a consideration. If the dealer can make the rubber game on a one-trick contract, there is a more cogent reason for trying to force him up. The extra loss entailed in the event of his succeeding is not of so much consideration as the chance of being still able to keep the game open. But it must be remembered that dealer is quite as ready to score heavily above the line as to win the rubber, and that a double of a light two-trick call in a red suit is only too likely to be the result.

Another reason for leaving fourth

hand with the onus of forcing the dealer is that in the event of the latter retaining the play of the hands, second hand as leader has learnt which suit to lead up to his partner. But with genuine strength himself, he should not hesitate to show it. There is a somewhat debatable point in connection with an original one-spade call, when second hand holds complete command in that suit. Some authorities contend that he should double it the first time because he may have no other opportunity of informing his partner of the nature of his hand. There is much to be said in favour of this advice ; the knowledge may help

fourth hand in making an otherwise risky no-trump declaration. On the other hand, it may deter the adversaries from entering upon a similar undertaking. I give the two aspects for what they are worth, and leave the decision to the individual player.

I have said little about the play of the hands because, once the declaration is settled, it does not differ materially from ordinary Bridge beyond the fact that generally considerably more information has been given away before a commencement is made. There is nevertheless always the necessity of making the defeat of the call the primary object. Thus when

the contract is to make three or four cards, the policy of the opposition should be to secure every available trick at the earliest opportunity and not to finesse with a view to winning more tricks than are necessary for the purpose. If these can be made, so much the better, but no risks should be taken. So, in opening, second hand should make his high cards early and lead up to any suit in which his partner has shown himself to hold strength. There is no need to lead him a trump if he has doubled a high red-suit declaration, as he is probably relying largely upon strength in other suits. The hearts conven-

tion, too, is little used amongst Auction Bridge players, as the varying grades of declarations have practically destroyed its significance.

With regard to

*FOURTH HAND,*

He is in the most enviable position of all, inasmuch as he has at the start the best opportunity of studying the composition of the other hands. With the spade call going round the first time he has nothing to do. He should invariably pass, and especially so if he has a good hand. The last thing he should do is to help his opponents out of it. But when a higher call has

been made, it devolves mainly on him to put on the pressure. We have seen that second hand should use some caution in bidding too freely, but his partner may display a more sporting spirit, short, of course, of courting certain disaster. Again it may often be advisable to make a somewhat slender call in order to inform second hand of the suit he wishes led. Still the danger of being doubled should always be kept in view. It is in the initial stages that fourth hand may take some liberty.

The advice as to overcalling one's partner applies equally to fourth hand, and should invariably be done

without hesitation. The information thus conveyed is invaluable, and the principle of forcing up the opposition is served at the same time. But in all cases, he should be guided by the calls that have been made and use this knowledge with discretion, always watching his opportunity of leaving the opposition in with a risky call.

# **"CUT-THROAT"**

OR

## **THREE-HANDED BRIDGE.**

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There seems to be considerable uncertainty as to the correct play of this make-shift game, even amongst competent Bridge players. Many players, indeed, who are quite familiar with it, would not recognise it under the first title, by which it is sometimes designated. As in Auction Bridge, the difficulties of "Cut-throat" or Three-handed Bridge lie chiefly in the method of scoring, so in order to clear

up any ambiguity on these points, I give here the rules as they have come to be accepted in those circles where the laws are decided by custom.

I may briefly summarise the rules by stating that the three players are against each other as far as the scoring is concerned. The one who cuts the lowest card plays the dummy hand first, and the second lowest takes the place on the dealer's left and takes the deal and the dummy in the following hand, the player on the original dealer's right moving to the left hand of the second dealer and in turn becoming dealer. It will thus be seen that the player on the dealer's right is

always the one to shift his seat on a new deal. After the declaration has been made by the dealer either from his own or the dummy hand, the rules as to doubling and playing the hands are the same as in ordinary Bridge, the two other players becoming partners.

The methods of scoring are as follows :—Only the dealer's score for tricks is placed *below* the line. The adversaries of the dealer *never* score below the line. If they win the odd trick or more, they score the value separately to each of themselves *above* the line. When they have honours between them they also add the value to their respective scores, however the

honours may be placed in their respective hands. Thus, supposing the dealer wins two tricks in hearts and holds simple honours, he will score 16 above and below the line, but if his opponents gain the two tricks and hold simple honours, they will each score 32 *above* the line and nothing below.

When any of the three players has reached 30 points *below* the line by tricks won as dealer, he marks off a game to himself in the ordinary way, but any points standing to the credit of the other two players at this stage remain and count towards the next game. The rubber is four games, but if any player secures two games he is

held to have won the rubber and adds 100 points to his score therefor. The respective scores are then added up, in the ordinary way, and the winner of the rubber receives separately from each of the other players the amount of the points in his favour after deducting each total from his. Or, in the event of the balance being against himself, he pays each of his opponents the amount due separately to them. The lower of the other two scorers also pays the difference to the third player.

We now come to the weak spot in "Cut-throat" Bridge, which militates so much against its popularity—the

compulsory calls when the dealer leaves the declaration to the Dummy hand. In that case, with three aces in his hand, he is obliged to call "No Trump"; otherwise (1st) he calls from his numerically longest suit, i.e., the suit of which he holds the most cards; (2nd) if he holds an equal number of two or more suits, he calls the suit with the greatest number of pips, counting the ace as eleven, and each of the other honours as ten; (3rd) if two or more suits have the same number of pips, the higher suit takes precedence, clubs over spades, diamonds over clubs, hearts over diamonds.

This is the most authoritative way of

playing "Cut-throat" Bridge, but there are variations which are preferred in private circles. For instance, honours are sometimes counted separately to each player as he holds them—10 for an ace, 8 for a heart, 6 for a diamond, and so on. Thus, if in a No Trump call the dealer had two aces and his opponents one each, he would score 20 above the line and the others 10 each ; and in the same manner with a suit declaration.

Again, some players prefer to count 50 only for the rubber.

Then, under the above conditions of only scoring the dealer's tricks below the line, a rubber may take up the

best part of an evening, so it is not uncommon for all scores for tricks, whether won by dealer or by his two adversaries, to be placed below the line. The obvious disadvantage of this is that in defeating the dealer's declaration, one of the opponents may give the game, and perhaps the rubber, to his partner for the time being. But, barring this serious drawback, the game so played is less tedious.

## "DUMMY" AND "DOUBLE-DUMMY" BRIDGE.

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The differences between "Dummy" and "Cut-throat" Bridge are as follows: The lowest cut takes the dummy hand *throughout* the first rubber, the second lowest following him in the second rubber, and so on. The deal goes round in the ordinary way, but after the opening lead there is the choice either of (1st) exposing only the dummy hand, or, when the player of dummy is not dealing, of

exposing both dummy's hand and the hand of 'the dealer's partner, as in Double-dummy.

A point to be remembered is that when the deal comes to the dummy hand, the dealer has to look at *his own hand* first and to declare from it, or pass to dummy just as if he had dealt first to himself ; nevertheless, the opening lead comes from the player *on the left* of dummy.

When the player of dummy has the declaration and is doubled, he can re-double although he has seen both hands, but he may not refer back to his own hand before deciding. If the deal is with either of his adversaries he

can only double from his own hand, and must not look at the dummy until the opening lead has been made.

In "Double-dummy" the only differences are that the dealer always deals to himself and never for the dummy hand, and the hand on his left always takes the opening lead and has the first option of doubling.

Neither player may look at more than one of his hands before the opening lead, except in the case of the dealer leaving the call to dummy, when the declaration is compulsory, as above.

In both these games the scoring is as in ordinary Bridge. In Dummy Bridge

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